DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 390 604 CS 213 466

AUTHOR Calderonello, Alice
TITLE Mapping the Terrain of Literacy.
PUB DATE Mar 96
NOTE 6p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (47th, Milwaukee, WI, March 27-30, 1996).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College School Cooperation; English Instruction; Higher Education; Junior High Schools; *Literacy; Mathematics Instruction; *Team Teaching
IDENTIFIERS Boundaries; Bowling Green State University OH; Ohio (Toledo); *Professional Concerns

ABSTRACT

Several types of boundaries divide individuals. Those boundaries can be classified as: (1) those created by a physical barrier and/or geographical distance; (2) institutional boundaries; and (3) professional boundaries. Sometimes boundaries play themselves out in a real situation, for example, in a collaborative teaching project involving faculty and graduate students from Bowling Green State University's English and mathematics departments and English and mathematics teachers (and their students) from Robinson Junior High in Toledo, Ohio. Time and effort are required to commute to Toledo for the project and to coordinate with administrators who have different responsibilities and agendas. "Mapping a terrain" conjures up images of the frontier, but the terrain which must be negotiated by educators is densely populated, and crossing "new and different borders" requires a good deal of diplomacy. (CR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 398 604

MAPPING THE TERRAIN OF LITERACY

Alice Calderonello

& C's 1996

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

How do we resist the drive to draw lines; how do we promote "more" and/or "different" border crossings? Our purpose here today is to explore these issues, and I am to begin by describing some of the boundaries that divide us. Of course, even the concept of "us" is problematic since the different "uses" we might (or might not) imagine are very much affected by the boundaries we draw. As I tried to identify barriers for the purpose of describing them within this text, they kept proliferating; everywhere I looked I found dividers. So to keep things manageable, I decided to describe several major *types* of boundaries, and to offer a few specific examples of each. As you hear these "types" described you may well consider them to be more useful as heuristic devices than as categories for classification; they aren't really separable because each one defines or helps constitute one or more of others.

Perhaps the most obvious type of boundary is one created by ***a physical barrier and/or geographical distance***. Boundaries of this nature can vary dramatically, and they are relatively easy to establish because people often don't consider the long-term consequences of particular spatial arrangements. Even within the same building, configurations that group faculty/administrators into different sets of offices can enhance some relationships and impede others. And, of course, as distances become greater —as they range from a ten-minute walk to a ten-minute drive to a ten-hour flight—the time and material resources individuals need to negotiate them increase dramatically. Technology can, potentially, provide assistance in such border crossings, but access to, for example, the internet is not equally available. Physical distance, then, is a powerful impediment to border crossings, especially when those crossings involve something other than co-authoring a piece of writing.

Even more serious than physical barriers are the institutional boundaries that separate us. By **institutional** boundaries, I mean the forms/structures our institutions take as well as the ideological formations that help to constitute these forms and structures. Consider, for example, how we define pre-college educational structures (as being *Pre*-college; as being public or private; as consisting of K-12th grade; as being divisible in particular ways--into high schools, elementary schools, etc.) Or consider how institutions of "higher" education are configured (2 year; 4 year; post-baccalaureate; graduate/professional). Within these entities reside other structures such as English Departments and Writing Centers. All of these structures, although they represent arbitrary divisions and groupings, are so common that they appear "normal" or "natural." And this naturalness, this seeming inevitability, creates and sustains boundaries that are almost insurmountable, whatever their effects. A colleague who could not be here today described some of the real, devastating consequences of such institutional boundaries: "administrative contracts that require teaching but deny faculty status" and "virulent strains of marginalization that remove...many of those who did much of composition's founding work within the academy...from policy making and conceptual authority."

Perhaps even more serious than the physical/geographical boundaries or the institutional boundaries that separate us are **professional boundaries.** Professional boundaries are particularly vexing because acknowledging them is a form of self-criticism and therefore painful. Mapping these borders requires us, for example, to recognize that although many who are engaged seriously in writing instruction teach in pre-college institutions, the major, national organization devoted to writing and communication deals only with *College* Composition and Communication. Mapping professional boundaries

also requires the recognition that the "discipline" of rhetoric and composition defines some as being within its borders and others as not. It requires us to acknowledge that struggles over methodological approaches, the legitimacy of various subdisciplines, or the relative value of teaching vs. scholarship are, in fact, power struggles and that the outcomes of these struggles determine how our work is defined—and evaluated.

I'd like to close by illustrating briefly how some of the boundaries I've described play themselves out in a real situation, a collaborative teaching project in which I and many others have been engaged for some time. The project involves faculty and graduate students from Bowling Green State University's English and Mathematics Departments within the College of Arts and Sciences and Math education faculty from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction within the College of Education. It also involves English and mathematics teachers (and their students) from Robinson Junior High, a central city school in Toledo.

As you can imagine, physical/geographical boundaries are significant impediments to our efforts. It is extremely difficult even for the participants at Bowling Green to meet since we are "housed" in four separate buildings, three separate departments (not in close physical proximity to one another), and two separate colleges. Even more significant, Robinson Junior High is about twenty-five miles away, a half-hour commute from Bowling Green—and that's when the weather is good.

More daunting than physical barriers, however, are the institutional boundaries. I don't have time to lay these all out for you, but here is a sampling: Neither faculty from Robinson nor faculty from Bowling Green have the flexibility to collaborate easily. All have full work loads and there is no easy mechanism to provide released time for anyone. One course off—and

this required months of effort—was provided for the faculty person in mathematics to teach an on-site class for Toledo middle school teachers. However, this course requires her to commute to Toledo once a week—no matter the weather—and she had to specially design it, since it had never been taught before. Other such barriers? Consider the amount of time and effort that it takes to coordinate with (supportive) administrators who have different responsibilities and agendas: the Chairs of three different departments, the Deans from two different colleges, a junior high school Principal, the Superintendent of a city school system. Moreover, even these administrators don't control the stipends for the two outstanding graduate students who are vital to the project! As to professional barriers, these too present serious impediments. It is probably no accident, for example, that all of the faculty heavily engaged in the project are tenured, since none of our professions define this type of effort to be "ordinary" (and therefore easily assessed for merit and/or professional advancement).

When I devised the title for this introductory talk, "Mapping the Terrain of Literacy," I chose it to suggest the broad scope of such a project. I also wanted to convey the idea that much of what needs to be done will be exploratory in nature. However, "mapping a terrain" conjures up images of a frontier—Louis and Clarke, wagon trains, that sort of thing. Now, while many of us who engage in collaborative efforts that ignore, or even defy boundaries may be pioneers of a sort, we are certainly not operating within a wilderness. Indeed, nothing could be farther from the truth. The terrain within which we must negotiate is densely populated. And my experiences in the last several years have convinced me that it is well to keep this density in mind—because in addition to imagination and persistence, crossing new and different borders requires a good deal of diplomacy.